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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E AND INR/AA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [EALD](#) [TZ](#)

SUBJECT: Zanzibar's Voter Registration:
So Far, so Good

Classified by Pol-Econ Chief Judy Buelow for reason
1.4(b)

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1. (C) Summary: The Zanzibar Electoral Commission (ZEC) is proceeding with generally peaceful and orderly voter registration in Unguja Island's Northern Region. While both the ruling CCM party and the opposition CUF are exchanging accusations about specific incidents, the two major parties seem generally satisfied with how registration is proceeding. For now, the parties are working within the ZEC's established procedures to resolve the inevitable disputes. Both parties are nonetheless preparing for future battles: the CUF is warning that the ruling party will attempt to pad the voter rolls with additional pro-CCM voters; CCM adherents fret that that foreign suppliers and donors may have deliberately introduced computer bugs and bias into the ZEC's high-tech equipment. (The CCM is avidly playing the foreign devil card: two days after poloff observed voter registration, the ruling party newspaper falsely alleged a CUF leader had accompanied her; septel to follow.) All observers believe that registration will continue at its current calm and measured pace until late March, when the ZEC begins to register voters in the CUF stronghold of Unguja's Urban West Region. End Summary

The Observation Project

2. (U) On February 9, poloff observed voter registration in 7 of the 63 centers in Unguja Island's Northern Region, including two newly-established and controversial centers in Bumbweni constituency, Pangatupu and Kichaka Pwiriri. Poloff also observed the Bumbweni school center and Makoba school center in this constituency before visiting one center in each of three constituencies: Mahonda in Donge Constituency; Kokotoni in Tumbatu Constituency; and Mkwajuni in the constituency of the same name.

3. (U) Before observing voter registration, poloff had met with ZEC Chairman Masauni and Elections Director Khamis Ame, CCM party Treasurer (who is also Zanzibar Water Minister) Mansoor Himid, CUF International Liaison Jussa Ladhu, and Mr. Shamhuna, the Acting Minister of State for Good Governance, in the Ministry responsible for elections. In all of these meetings, poloff asked these interlocutors how they thought voter registration was proceeding and what problems they had observed or anticipated. Given government sensitivities about international observers, poloff took care to notify interlocutors in the government and in both parties of her intent to observe registration. In her discussions with ZEC officials, she confirmed that her credentials were in order, and that she had followed all proper procedures before she ventured into the field.

Observations from the Field

4. (SBU) In each of these centers, three or four ZEC officials were using the donor-supplied materials to photograph, fingerprint, and record data for applicants; in all of the centers poloff observed, materials were in adequate supply, and ZEC officials used them effectively and efficiently. Between four and six credentialed party agents were stationed at each center to observe the proceedings; CCM and CUF both had representatives in each of the centers observed, and many of the smaller opposition parties also stationed their agents at some centers. Two or three uniformed, unarmed police officers kept order, and usually stood inside the center or on the

threshold. (This contrasted with registration centers poloff observed on Pemba Island, where the police officers typically stayed at a distance so as not to seem intimidating.) The local sheha was also invariably present, although poloff did not observe any sheha take an active role in registration procedures. Under the reforms mandated by the bipartisan Muafaka Accord, these village headmen, who are widely considered to be pro-CCM, lost the power they had formerly had to determine eligibility for registration. In Kichaka Pwiriri, the sheha was also the CCM party agent, but elsewhere, these roles were kept distinct.

A Generally Well-Run Operation

15. (C) While ZEC-issued credentials were often carefully scrutinized, in no case was poloff denied access to a registration center, nor did she see any other credentialed official denied access. An observer from the Tanzanian NGO TEMCO was present at Pangatupu, and a mobile group of four opposition party leaders entered Bumbweni, and later Kichaka Pwiriri to observe registration; all were granted access. Neither did poloff see any official or party agent intervene with registration procedures or intimidate anybody else who was present in a registration center. The previous month, the CUF had circulated a list of complaints about specific incidents, including cases in which party agents were denied access, or in which local government officials seized an agent's notes. (Reftel A) In his February 8 discussions with poloff, the ZEC chairman noted there had been occasional displays of ?temper? since registration began in Unguja's Northern Region. Poloff's general impression, however, was of a well-run and orderly registration procedure, with relatively infrequent incidents of conflict or disputed registrations.

The Eyes of the Storm

16. (C) The opposition's concern focused on the two new centers, Pangatupu and Kichaka Pwiriri. Most registration centers are located in school classrooms, but these two centers consist of huts made of woven palms, both hastily erected in remote fields. The ZEC has drawn from the 2000 census figures to estimate the number of voters who are expected to register in each center. Since these two centers cover areas boundaries established after the 2000, estimates of expected registration are very rough. The opposition charges that the CCM will use these remote centers to pad the rolls with pro-CCM outsiders. Typically, the CUF worries that members of the volunteer militias, who they assume to be pro-CCM, will be transferred en masse to register in the most closely contested constituencies. (Appearances notwithstanding, it is perfectly legal for government employees to register in the district to which they have been transferred, no matter how briefly they have resided there.) When she arrived in Kichaka Pwiriri, Poloff noted that all of the thirty-some people waiting to register were young men. Later, however, three women arrived; one was sent back for more documents and the other two were duly registered.

17. (C) Apparently in response to these tensions, the government has increased security around Pangatupu. In remarks that were published in the February 8 issue of ?Guardian,? ZEC Chairman Masauni complained that the police protection around Pangatupu was excessive and potentially intimidating to people seeking to register. Also speaking on February 8, the CUF party's Jussa Ladhu said that Pangatupu was surrounded by a cordon of police officers who determined which applicants would be allowed into the center to register. When Poloff arrived at Pangatupu the following morning, she observed only the standard two police officers, who were not acting in a particularly intimidating manner. Just before her arrival, however, when she was about a half mile from Pangatupu, poloff's vehicle was passed by a van carrying a half dozen uniformed policemen who were traveling in the opposite direction. Given the remoteness of the area, and the lack of any other traffic on the narrow dirt track leading to Pangatupu, it is highly likely that these police officers had departed the registration center only few minutes earlier.

The Parties Play by the Rules, for Now

18. (C) Leaders in both of the major political parties thought that registration in Unguja's Northern Region was generally going well. Inevitably, both the CUF and the CCM had a catalogue of complaints about specific incidents, such as shoving matches involving party agents or the registration of ineligible minors. For the time being, however, both parties appear willing to channel their complaints through ZEC and to follow the legally established procedures to resolve disputes about specific registrations. ZEC Chairman Masauni was confident that could resolve all of the formally submitted disputes in a reasonable timeframe. Registration is now complete in Pemba; soon, the ZEC will lists of registered voters, opening a six-day period in which any citizen may challenge any name that does or does not appear on the list. Masauni anticipated that the ZEC would have to adjudicate several hundred disputed cases, in a process that may be appealed up to the High Court. The ZEC Chairman was confident that the system could manage this caseload, and would not be overwhelmed.

9.(U) All interlocutors, regardless of their affiliation, thought that registration would continue to run smoothly while the ZEC's teams finished registering voters in Unguja's Northern Region and proceeded to the Southern Region, both CCM strongholds. All expected that serious conflict would likely emerge only when registration began in the pro-CUF Urban West Region. (This area includes the tourist attractions of Stone Town.)

10. (C) The CUF party, in particular, is working scrupulously within the system. In its recent communiqué, CUF has quietly dropped its accusations that individual ZEC officials are biased, and its demands that they be replaced. Gone too, are the menacing crowds of 'Blue Guards,' CUF youth brigades that had attempted to defend some registration centers on Pemba from militia members who sought to register. The CUF's Jussa Ladhu says the party's strategy is to observe registration closely and to alert the international community and the Tanzanian press to any irregularities.

The Parties Draw their Battle Lines

11. (C) Both parties are nonetheless preparing their strategies, and their cover stories, in the event voter registration doesn't go their way. The opposition CUF is playing a numbers game. Jussa Ladhu disparaged the official estimate that 650,000 voters will register on Zanzibar. According to CUF estimates, Zanzibar has no more than 480,000 eligible voters, since the 2000 census counted many underage individuals or new arrivals unable to meet the stringent residency requirements for voting in a Zanzibari election. The CUF accuses the CCM of plotting to pad voter rolls with up to 150,000 excess voters who would be transferred into closely contested constituencies. In a separate meeting, CCM Treasurer Himid scoffed at opposition's accusations, saying that observers would notice if so many extra people appeared on Isles; and that the CCM couldn't afford to feed or pay so many people in any case. Acting Minister for Good Governance Shamuha seemed to fuel CUF's suspicions, however, when he speculated that some constituencies might register up to 110% of anticipated voters registration, with the difference attributable to population influxes since the 2000 census.

12. (C) On the other side of the partisan divide, CCM and government interlocutors hinted that they might have to intervene to protect vulnerable Zanzibaris from opposition violence. CCM Treasurer Himid said that the Zanzibaris of mainland origin and the miniscule Christian minority were particularly vulnerable to CUF pressure; he said that the government would beef up security when registration began in the diverse Urban West Region. He noted that the homes of two CCM party agents in the Northern region had been torched, in incidents that might have been related to registration conflicts. He said that in both cases, there had been no arrests, and no injuries in the attacks and that material damages were minimal.

13. (C) The CCM will continue to accuse foreigners

of undue influence in the registration process, and to portray international observers as tools of the opposition. Himid said that the CCM, like the CUF, kept lists of registration disputes, but that the CCM did not send its complaints to foreign embassies. Himid claimed that every time a CUF communique circulated, his CCM colleagues would place bets on which foreign diplomats would come calling, how soon, and what they would say. Himid also questioned the reliability of the equipment and materials that the ZEC acquired from foreign donors and foreign suppliers. He speculated that outside interests could deliberately install a biased program in this sophisticated computer equipment. (For the record: USAID purchased a computer scanner, and a ?Basket Group? of nine other donors purchased all other materials to establish the Permanent Voters Register. In accordance with the ZEC?s preference, the complete package was purchased from the South African consortium Waymark.) Two days after poloff observed voter registration in the field, the CCM-owned daily ?Zanzibar Leo? ran an article that falsely claimed she had traveled with a CUF official, and opined that this undermined the credibility of all international observers (details to follow septel).

14. (C) Comment: The ZEC continues to demonstrate that it can run the complex voter registration operation effectively and well, and that it can withstand significant partisan pressure while it is doing so. The opposition CUF now appears to realize that it could gain everything from working within the system, but that it can only lose credibility by resorting to some of its old confrontational tactics. The CCM is the wild card. Some ruling party stalwarts seem to be running scared as the Permanent Voters Register approaches completion, and may attempt to undermine it. Ultimately, the ZEC may produce a complete and credible PVR only if the CCM government allows it to do so. End Comment.

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